May 17, 2007

UC Davis, UC Merced and Buck Institute Cooperate to Meet Stem Cell Oversight Requirements

(SACRAMENTO, Calif.) – Taking a cue from the state's stem cell agency, which has galvanized stem cell research and opened up lines of communication among researchers in California, scientists at the University of California, Merced and the Buck Institute for Age Research in Marin County have established a cooperative agreement with UC Davis to meet the oversight requirements of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) for stem cell research.

Through the agreement, UC Merced and the Buck Institute will use a UC Davis Health System medical and ethical standards committee to review any potential human subject research funded by CIRM. These committees typically include knowledgeable scientists, physicians, lawyers and community representatives, who assess safety and related issues involved in conducting clinical research. While new or small research institutions may have scientists who can contribute to stem cell research efforts, often they lack the institutional infrastructure necessary for appropriate medical and ethical oversight.

"This type of collaboration strengthens California's leadership in stem cell research and moves it forward in an efficient, safe and cost-effective manner," said Ann Bonham, executive associate dean for Academic Affairs at UC Davis Health System. "Fostering the variety of research work now being done by talented scientists, no matter where they work, offers a great chance that one day soon we'll see California also leading the way in turning that stem cell research into actual therapies and cures."

UC Davis has more than 20 scientists involved in various research studies involving regenerative medicine. Its stem cell oversight committee includes two veteran stem cell researchers, several cell biology professors, a physician whose interests include medical genetics, a public representative who is an attorney, and a patient advocate from an Alzheimer's disease organization.

“We’re tremendously pleased to see this kind of institutional collaboration emerge from our funding,” said Sherry Lansing, a member of the CIRM governing board and co-chair of the committee that developed CIRM’s medical and ethical research regulations. “We look forward to similar cooperation among other research centers.”

UC Davis frequently works with other institutions and community partners and is also part of a clinical and translational science consortium established by the National Institutes of Health that emphasizes the sharing of resources wherever possible. Recently, the university also formed a group of review boards for hospitals, universities and local agencies in Northern California that participate in human subjects research. UC Davis hopes to formally create a similar panel for institutions conducting stem cell-related research in the region.

“We’re grateful for UC Davis’ assistance in meeting CIRM’s requirements,” said UC Merced Vice Chancellor for Research Samuel J. Traina. “It’s key for our commitment to responsible, ethical research in the emerging area of stem cell science.”

The agreements among the three institutions emerged from a pair of regional workshops on stem cell research oversight held earlier this spring at Stanford University and the Burnham Institute for Medical Research.

“This cooperative agreement is a win-win for all involved,” said James Kovach, president and chief operating officer of the Buck Institute, which is based in Novato. “Avoiding the need to build a separate oversight committee helps CIRM monies go farther; and it establishes working relationships that can be built on as all of us move forward with stem cell research.”

Lansing noted that collaborative institutional oversight is common when a project involves researchers at several universities or other institutions. This agreement is

unusual because none of the participating institutions are actually conducting research together.

"This is a mechanism to advance research generally, upholding standards held in common by all three institutions," said Lansing. "It's also a model for exactly the type of efforts that California voters encouraged when they approved the state's stem cell initiative in 2004. It's an innovative solution that helps expand stem cell research, especially for smaller institutions."

CONTACTS:
Charles Casey
UC Davis Health System
(916) 734-9048
charles.casey@ucdmc.ucdavis.edu

Ana Nelson Shaw
UC Merced Office of Communications
(209) 228-4406 office
(209) 205-8561 cell
ashaw@ucmerced.edu

Kris Rebillot
Buck Institute for Age Research
(415) 209-2260 office
(415) 717-3268 cell
krebillot@buckinstitute.org

Dale Carlson
California Institute for Regenerative Medicine
(415) 396-9117
dcarlson@cirm.ca.gov

UC Davis has a variety of researchers working on a variety of stem cell investigations in both Davis and Sacramento. It is currently constructing a 100,000 square-foot stem cell research facility on its campus in Sacramento, where scientists will have access to state-of-the-art laboratories and cell manufacturing and testing rooms. That facility will complement the university's new Clinical and Translational Science Center, which is designed to expedite the translation and integration of scientific research into discoveries and treatments that benefit society. In 2005, the National Institutes of Health also awarded $6 million to fund a Center of Excellence in Translational Human Stem Cell Research on the Davis campus. One of only two such centers in the nation, it is focused on exploring stem and progenitor cell therapies for the treatment of childhood diseases, including those that affect the blood and kidneys.

UC Merced opened on Sept. 5, 2005, as the 10th campus in the University of California system and the first American research university of the 21st century. The campus significantly expands access to the UC system for students throughout the state, with a special mission to increase college-going rates among students in the San Joaquin Valley. It also serves as a major base of advanced research and as a stimulus to economic growth and diversification throughout the region. Situated near Yosemite National Park, the university is expected to grow rapidly, topping out at approximately 25,000 students within 30 years.

The Buck Institute is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to extending the healthspan, the healthy years of each individual's life. The National Institute of Aging designated the Buck a *Nathan Shock Center of Excellence in the Biology of Aging*, one of just five centers in the country. Buck Institute scientists work in an innovative, interdisciplinary setting to understand the mechanisms of aging and to discover new ways of detecting, preventing and treating age-related diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease, cancer, stroke, and arthritis. Collaborative research at the Institute is supported by genomics, proteomics and bioinformatics technology. For more information: www.buckinstitute.org.

Governed by the Independent Citizens Oversight Committee (ICOC), the CIRM was established in 2004 with the passage of Proposition 71, the California Stem Cell Research and Cures Initiative. The statewide ballot measure, which provided $3 billion in funding for stem cell research at California universities and research institutions, was approved by California voters, and called for the establishment of an entity to make grants and provide loans for stem cell research, research facilities, and other vital research opportunities. To date, the ICOC has approved 119 research grants totaling more than $158 million. For more information, please visit www.cirm.ca.gov.

###